

Awareness Starts With You

Preparing for severe weather is the theme of Severe Weather Awareness Week, so how do we go about it? Preparedness plans come in all sizes as dictated by individual and collective needs. Do you know the basic safety rules? Would your children know what to do if home alone? Are plans ready to move elderly or disabled people to shelter quickly? Do you know what the safety plans are at school, work, the local shopping center, recreational facilities, etc.?

Basic severe weather preparedness plans must include:

- 1) A thorough knowledge of safety rules.
- 2) Designation of the best available protective area.
- 3) A reliable method of communication to receive and exchange information.
- 4) An emergency supply kit.
- 5) Drills to test and practice the plan.
- 6) Contact your local emergency management agency, National Weather Service office, or American Red Cross chapter for additional weather safety information.



Debris surrounds a tornado shelter in southeast Fayette County after a tornado moved through the area on April 6, 2008.

Be **Red Cross** Ready...Being prepared for emergencies is crucial at home, work, school, and in your community. Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood, workplace, or school; or can restrict you to your home. What would you do if basic services - water, gas, electricity, telephones - were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. You and your family should be prepared before disaster strikes. The Red Cross encourages you to:



-Get an emergency kit with essential supplies for the entire family and emergency items such as flashlights, batteries, blankets, a portable radio, food and bottled water for three days for each person, and a first aid kit. Examples of an emergency kit and portable radio are shown here.



-Make and practice an evacuation plan as a family, including escape routes and a predetermined meeting place. Include pets in your plan. Learn when and how to turn off utilities and to use life-saving tools such as fire extinguishers. Everyone should know where emergency information and supplies are stored.

-Be informed about your area. Get emergency information from NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards, local television and radio stations, cell phones/text messages, or local warning systems. Know which type of severe weather is common to your area. Take action when needed by assessing the situation, calling 911 if someone is injured, and administering first aid, if needed.

Learn more information about disaster training and emergency supply kits at www.birminghamredcross.org or www.redcross.org.